

RCW 88.16.118 Limited liability of pilots and pilot trainees—Liability of vessel, owner, or operator not limited. (1) (a) A pilot licensed to act as such by the state of Washington, and any countywide port district located partly or entirely within the Grays Harbor pilotage district as defined by RCW 88.16.050(2) authorized to provide pilotage services with pilots employed by or under contract with the port district, shall not be liable for damages in excess of the amount of five thousand dollars for damages or loss occasioned by a pilot's or pilot trainee's errors, omissions, fault, or neglect in the performance of pilotage or pilot training services, except as may arise by reason of the willful misconduct or gross negligence of the pilot.

(b) A pilot trainee licensed to act as such by the state of Washington is not liable for damages in excess of the amount of five thousand dollars for damages or loss occasioned by the pilot trainee's errors, omissions, fault, or neglect in the performance of pilotage or pilot training services, except as may arise by reason of the willful misconduct or gross negligence of the pilot trainee.

(2) When a pilot or pilot trainee boards a vessel to provide pilotage services, that pilot or pilot trainee becomes a servant of the vessel and its owner and operator. Nothing in this section exempts the vessel, its owner, or its operator from liability for damage or loss occasioned by that ship to a person or property on the ground that (a) the ship was piloted by a Washington state licensed pilot or pilot trainee, or (b) the damage or loss was occasioned by the error, omission, fault, or neglect of a Washington state licensed pilot or pilot trainee.

(3) Pilots, pilot trainees, and board members are immune from civil liability to any party for damages or other relief that is in any way based on the communication of, to a pilot or pilot trainee, to the board, or to any other appropriate governmental authority or person, any of the following: (a) Information about any incident or occurrence involving collision, allision, or grounding of any vessel, including near-miss occurrences; (b) information about any other marine occurrence that the pilot or pilot trainee believes involved or involves undue risk in the navigation of any vessel that could result in damage to any person, vessel, structure, aid to navigation, or the marine environment of this state; or (c) any report or other written, oral, or electronic evaluation of the performance of any pilot or pilot trainee. "Performance" includes, but is not limited to, professional ability, attitude, performance of duties, effort, knowledge, skills, and other relevant factors. This protection and immunity does not apply when a pilot or pilot trainee intentionally releases or discloses information known to be false. The immunity granted to a person under this section is in addition to any common law or statutory privilege or immunity enjoyed by the person, and this section is not intended to abrogate or modify any such common law or statutory privilege or immunity. The immunity from civil liability provided under this section shall be liberally construed to accomplish the purposes of this chapter and to encourage the free flow of information and opinions to the board. [2008 c 128 s 11. Prior: 2005 c 123 s 2; 2005 c 26 s 3; 1984 c 69 s 1.]

Effective date—2005 c 26: See note following RCW 88.16.035.